

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA,  
CHAIRMAN

EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK  
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA  
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK  
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND  
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO  
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS  
JOHN F. TIERNEY, MASSACHUSETTS  
WM. LACY CLAY, MISSOURI  
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA  
STEPHEN F. LYNCH, MASSACHUSETTS  
BRIAN HIGGINS, NEW YORK  
JOHN A. YARMUTH, KENTUCKY  
BRUCE L. BRALEY, IOWA  
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
BETTY MCCOLLUM, MINNESOTA  
JIM COOPER, TENNESSEE  
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND  
PAUL W. HODES, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY, CONNECTICUT  
JOHN P. SARBANES, MARYLAND  
PETER WELCH, VERMONT  
JACKIE SPEIER, CALIFORNIA

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051  
FACSIMILE (202) 225-4784  
MINORITY (202) 225-5074

[www.oversight.house.gov](http://www.oversight.house.gov)

TOM DAVIS, VIRGINIA,  
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

DAN BURTON, INDIANA  
CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, CONNECTICUT  
JOHN M. McHUGH, NEW YORK  
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA  
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA  
TODD RUSSELL PLATTTS, PENNSYLVANIA  
CHRIS CANNON, UTAH  
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TENNESSEE  
MICHAEL R. TURNER, OHIO  
DARRELL E. ISSA, CALIFORNIA  
KENNY MARCHANT, TEXAS  
LYNN A. WESTMORELAND, GEORGIA  
PATRICK T. McHENRY, NORTH CAROLINA  
VIRGINIA FOXX, NORTH CAROLINA  
BRIAN P. BILBRAY, CALIFORNIA  
BILL SALI, IDAHO  
JIM JORDAN, OHIO

January 2, 2009

The Honorable John P. Walters  
Director  
Office of National Drug Control Policy  
Executive Office of the President  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Walters:

As you may know, I will be leaving the Oversight Committee to become Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee. Before I make this transition, I want to provide you with information from the Oversight Committee's investigation into the use of steroids in professional wrestling, which over 3 million children and teens watch regularly. I also request that your office examine the systemic deficiencies in the testing policies and practices of professional wrestling that the investigation has found.

On June 24, 2007, Chris Benoit, a professional wrestler with World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), killed his wife and son and hung himself. According to press reports, Mr. Benoit's testosterone levels were ten times normal levels when he committed suicide.

In response to concerns about this incident, the Committee wrote to the WWE, Total Nonstop Action, and other professional wrestling organizations requesting information on their steroid policies and their knowledge of steroid abuse within their organizations. The Committee also conducted transcribed interviews with WWE Chairman Vince McMahon and other professional wrestling officials.

The documents produced to the Committee, and the information provided during interviews, indicate that steroid use is pervasive in professional wrestling and that the organizations involved have not taken adequate steps to address this problem. The information reviewed by the Committee shows:

- In the first year of the WWE's testing program, which began in March 2006, 40% of wrestlers tested positive for steroids and other drugs even after being warned in advance that they were going to be tested.

- Six months after the WWE announced its 2006 steroid testing policy, it relaxed the policy to allow wrestlers suspended for steroid abuse to participate in “selected televised events” and “pay-per-views.”
- The WWE hired four of five wrestlers who tested positive for steroids in “pre-contract” testing conducted in 2007 and 2008.
- The WWE regularly approved “therapeutic use exemptions,” explicitly allowing the use of steroids as part of a “testosterone replacement acceptance program” for wrestlers who abused steroids in the past.
- Test results from the WWE’s top competitor, Total Nonstop Action Wrestling, reveal that a large proportion of TNA wrestlers have also tested positive and that there are significant weaknesses in the TNA testing program.

The Committee obtained information relating to the death of Chris Benoit. According to WWE officials, Mr. Benoit was tested four times for steroids prior to his death. He tested positive three times, but each time he received only a warning or no penalty at all. The Committee obtained no evidence that efforts were made to discourage his steroid abuse.

### **World Wrestling Entertainment Policies and Practices**

According to documents provided to the Committee, the WWE had a steroids testing program in the 1990s that was eliminated in 1996. On October 25, 1996, the WWE’s Chairman and CEO, Vince McMahon, issued a memo explaining his decision. The memo stated: “the incidence of illegal and performance enhancing drugs is so slight that group testing is no longer cost effective or necessary.”<sup>1</sup>

In March 2006, Mr. McMahon reinstated the steroids testing program after press reports suggested that the death of popular WWE wrestler Eddie Guerrero four months earlier was linked to steroid abuse.<sup>2</sup> Under the new WWE policy, the first series of tests were considered “baseline tests.”<sup>3</sup> Wrestlers were informed in advance that they would be tested and that no

---

<sup>1</sup> Memorandum from Vince McMahon to All Talent, Agents, Referees and Ring Crew, World Wrestling Federation (Oct. 25, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> *Newsmakers: Wrestler’s Cause of Death Left to Autopsy*, Philadelphia Inquirer (Nov. 15, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc., *2006 Substance Abuse and Drug Testing Policy* (Feb. 27, 2006).

penalties would be imposed. The documents produced to the Committee indicate that 75 of the 186 wrestlers (40%) tested positive for steroids or other drugs.<sup>4</sup>

After this initial baseline testing, the WWE began imposing penalties for wrestlers who tested positive. Despite these penalties, between March 2006 and March 2008, testing of WWE wrestlers resulted in an additional 34 positive test results for steroids.<sup>5</sup> The WWE also reported to the Committee that there were an additional 23 positive tests for other drugs, including cocaine, ecstasy, and methadone.<sup>6</sup>

The drug policy was weakened when Mr. McMahon allowed wrestlers to perform even in cases where they had been suspended as a result of positive drug tests. On August 21, 2006, the WWE issued an amendment to the substance abuse policy stating that the WWE “may, at its discretion, schedule the Talent to work selected televised events without pay and pay-per-views with pay during the 30 day suspension period.”<sup>7</sup>

On September 25, 2007, the Committee interviewed Dr. David Black, who is the program administrator for the WWE steroid testing program. In his interview, Dr. Black stated that this amendment was adopted because “it was becoming difficult to deal with the talent who were being suspended.”<sup>8</sup> Dr. Black told Committee staff that he was “unaccustomed to programs that suspend and you’re not suspended.”<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the large number of positive drug tests, documents provided by the WWE indicate that between November 2007 and March 2008, five individuals tested positive for

---

<sup>4</sup> Dr. David Black, *Response to House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Committee* (Sept. 24, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc., Response to Congressional Letter, Section 3, prepared by Aegis Sciences Corporation (2008); Aegis Science Corporation, World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc., *Talent Wellness Program Summary Report, July 1, 2007 – March 31, 2008* (April 2008).

<sup>6</sup> World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc., Response to Congressional Letter, Section 3, prepared by Aegis Sciences Corporation (2008); Aegis Science Corporation, World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc., *Talent Wellness Program Summary Report, July 1, 2007 – March 31, 2008* (April 2008).

<sup>7</sup> *Second Amendment Dated August 21, 2006 to World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc. 2006 Substance Abuse and Drug Testing Policy Dated February 27, 2006 (“Policy”)* (Aug. 21, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Interview of Dr. David Black, at 36.

<sup>9</sup> Interview of Dr. David Black, at 38.

steroids in “pre-contract” testing. Despite these positive tests, WWE hired four of these individuals.<sup>10</sup>

On September 24, 2007, the Committee staff conducted an interview with Dr. Tracy Ray, a physician with Andrews Sports Medicine and Orthopedic Center who is under contract with the WWE as the “medical review officer” for the WWE’s steroid testing program. During his interview, Dr. Ray discussed the WWE’s policy for “therapeutic use exemptions” to allow wrestlers to continue performing while using steroids. Dr. Ray informed the Committee that he is not a trained endocrinologist. He also stated that he does not examine wrestlers, discuss their medical conditions with their doctors, or conduct detailed reviews of their medical conditions before granting therapeutic use exemptions. According to the documents produced to the Committee, Dr. Ray approved seven therapeutic use exemptions since 2006. Dr. Ray informed the Committee that there was “shadiness in almost every case that I’ve reviewed.”<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Black, the WWE’s program administrator for the steroid testing program, described these therapeutic use exemptions as “a testosterone replacement acceptance program.”<sup>12</sup> He indicated that this policy allows wrestlers who have damaged their endocrine system through the abuse of anabolic steroids to continue using these drugs.<sup>13</sup>

On December 14, 2007, the Committee interviewed Vince McMahon, the Chairman of the WWE and one of its most well-known performers. Mr. McMahon has admitted to using steroids in the past.<sup>14</sup> He refused to answer questions from the Committee, however, about his personal steroid use.<sup>15</sup> Mr. McMahon informed the Committee that even though he continues to perform in wrestling events, he is not subject to the WWE substance abuse policy, including its drug testing provisions.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Letter to House Oversight Committee from Jerry S. McDevitt (Aug. 14, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Interview of Dr. Tracy Ray, at 45 (Sept. 24, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Interview of Dr. David Black, at 124 (Sept. 25, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Dr. David Black, *supra* note 10.

<sup>14</sup> *WWF Owner McMahon Admits He Used Steroids*, USA Today (July 17, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Interview of Vincent Kennedy McMahon at 125-126 (December 14, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Interview of Vincent Kennedy McMahon at 122-123 (December 14, 2007).

During his interview, Mr. McMahon was asked whether he knew if there are health risks from steroid use, including long-term risks. He responded: "I'm not a doctor. I don't know."<sup>17</sup> When asked what he would tell wrestlers who asked about potential health risks, he answered: "I don't know if there are really any long-term effects of steroid usage."<sup>18</sup> When asked whether steroids could cause impairment and risks to wrestlers and others in the ring, Mr. McMahon indicated that he had never considered the question.<sup>19</sup>

As part of the Committee's inquiry, the Committee sought information about any steroid testing involving Chris Benoit, the wrestler who killed himself and his wife and son in June 2007. WWE officials informed the Committee that Mr. Benoit was tested four times under the WWE program. He tested positive three times. He received no suspensions or other penalties as a result of these positive tests, and the Committee obtained no evidence indicating that efforts were made by WWE to discourage his steroid use. An autopsy of Mr. Benoit revealed that at the time of his death, he had ten times the normal testosterone level in his system.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Total Nonstop Action Wrestling Policies and Practices**

The Committee also obtained documents relating to the steroids policies and testing practices of the WWE's top competitor, Total Nonstop Action Wrestling (TNA).<sup>21</sup> According to the documents, the TNA conducted baseline steroid testing of its wrestlers starting in January 2008. The documents provided to the Committee indicate that, despite having advance warning of these tests, 15 of 60 wrestlers (25%), tested positive for steroids.<sup>22</sup> An additional 11 wrestlers tested positive for other drugs.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Interview of Vincent Kennedy McMahon at 13 (December 14, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Interview of Vincent Kennedy McMahon at 13 (December 14, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Interview of Vincent Kennedy McMahon at 15 (December 15, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Associated Press, *Benoit's Testosterone Was 10 Times Normal Level* (July 20, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Chairman Henry A. Waxman to Dixie Carter, President, TNA Entertainment LLC (Aug. 10, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Total Nonstop Action Wrestling, *Drug Test Results* (Sept. 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Total Nonstop Action Wrestling, *Drug Test Results* (Sept. 2008).

The Honorable John P. Walters  
January 2, 2009  
Page 6

Eight months later, in August 2008, the TNA issued a drug and alcohol abuse policy that includes random testing, although it fails to explain the protocol for selecting wrestlers who will be tested or provide information about how samples will be collected.<sup>24</sup>

### Conclusion

The evidence obtained by the Oversight Committee indicates that illegal use of steroids and other drugs in professional wrestling is a serious problem that the wrestling organizations are not effectively addressing. One former wrestler who agreed to talk to Committee staff on condition of anonymity explained that, in the wrestling business, “steroids are like white socks and tape, they’re just part of your gear.”

Since the Committee began its investigation last year, both the WWE and the TNA have made efforts to improve their steroid testing programs. But these efforts suffer from a lack of independence and transparency. As a result of these weaknesses, the organizations appear unable to effectively prevent the use of steroids and other illegal drugs by professional wrestlers.

Over 3 million children and teenagers watch professional wrestling each week. The apparently widespread use of steroids in professional wrestling sends the wrong message to youth. For this reason, I request that ONDCP examine steroid use in professional wrestling and take appropriate steps to address this problem.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Brian Cohen of the Committee staff at (202) 225-5420.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman  
Chairman

cc: Rep. Darrell Issa

---

<sup>24</sup> Total Nonstop Action Wrestling, *Entertainment and Drug and Alcohol Abuse Policy* (Aug. 2008).